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Mrs. Compton's Manager

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Mrs. Compton's Manager

A Comedy in Three Acts

By HARRY O. OSGOOD
Author of "The Baby," etc.

BOSTON
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Mrs. Compton's Manager

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CHARACTERS

MRS. HELEN COMPTON, *a widow.*
LEONARD BARRING, *her nephew.*
ETHEL DURAND, *a cousin to Mrs. Compton.*
ELPHRON VARTRAY, *a landscape gardener.*
JAMES HEATON, *an architect.*
FREDERICK LOWELL, *Bishop of Hoboken.*
MARGARET ROSWELL,
JACKSON, *butler at "Fairthorn."*
MARIE DEMARQUE, *actress.*
MRS. MCGILLION, *housekeeper at "Fairthorn."*
TOMPKINS, *butler.*
WILLIAMS, *maid.*
WATKINS, *farmhand.*

NOTE.—If necessary the parts of MRS. MCGILLION and WILLIAMS, and TOMPKINS and WATKINS can be doubled.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I. SCENE I.—At Fairthorn, Mrs. Compton's summer residence. An evening in April. SCENE II.—The same. Midnight the same night.

ACT II.—The same. A morning one week later.

ACT III.—At Mrs. Compton's town house, New York. An afternoon the following October.

COSTUMES—MODERN.

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Mrs. Compton's Manager.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The sitting-room at "Fairthorn,"* MRS. COMPTON'S *summer house. In* R. *wall, forward, open fireplace. Further back, open doorway. Back wall, practical window* R.C., *door* L. C. *Doorway with portieres, wall* L. C. *Table with books, magazines, etc., a little* R. *of* C. *Writing desk* L. *back corner, against back wall. Sofa* L. *wall forward. Lighted lamp on table. Small house safe,* L. *wall forward.*

(*Curtain rises, disclosing* VARTRAY *sitting in large easy chair* L. *of table, smoking a pipe and reading a newspaper.* HEATON *standing in front of the fire, filling his pipe from box of tobacco on mantel over the fireplace. After a moment* BARRING *comes in door* L. *He is in a dress suit; carries long rain-coat and crush hat. He comes forward and lays these on the sofa. The other men in shirt-sleeves.*)

HEATON. Town?

BARRING. Yaas! (*Puts in his monocle and proceeds to put on his gloves.*) Town? I should rather say so! Say! you don't know how beastly dull I am here. Of course I'm supposed to be looking after you fellers put the place into shape for Aunt Nellie to come down,—but, oh my! Of course, you do all the work, and all I do is to hang around and hate myself.

VARTRAY. I'm afraid we haven't looked after you as much as we should.

BAR. Looked after me! Te, he,—that's good! Why, I'm here to look after you, of course. It's all right,—I don't blame you. You work so hard all day on the gardens and the new stable that you want to rest, of course, when it comes night, and as I don't care anything for her silly old flowers and horses, I haven't seen much of you in the daytime. So if it hadn't been for running into town every other night or so, it would have been jolly well dull for me all around.

Enter JACKSON, R., *with suit case.*

JACKSON (*to* BARRING). Your case, sir.

BAR. Oh, all right,—and Jackson, by the way, bring down my bag of clubs, please. I think I shall run out to the Brae Club to-morrow.

JACK. Very well, sir. [*Exit* L.

VAR. You won't come down again in the morning, then?

BAR. Bless you, no. I guess you fellers can work all right even if I don't, eh? I may be gone for a week,—I've got to see my aunt. Say, did you notice that letter I got this afternoon?

HEAT. The regular one?

BAR. No, not Marie's. I mean that one with the Pinehurst postmark. That's from my aunt. You know what a match-maker she is.

VAR. I've heard she's addicted to that sort of thing.

BAR. Yaas! Why, she made Tommy Dixon's second wife, and Billy Green's grass-widow, and lots and lots of others. What do you suppose she wants to do now?

VAR. Say it quick, and relieve our suspense.

BAR. (*poking himself in the chest*). Me! me! Wants to match me! (*The other men laugh.*) Oh, you needn't laugh, —she's in earnest enough when she gets on this sort of war-path. Why, she's the reason that Johnny Thomas turned Catholic, and studied to be a priest. It was either that or marry Fannie Waters, auntie was so close after him.

HEAT. (*laughing*). Why didn't he take Fannie?

BAR. Oh, I don't know,—preferred the other I suppose. You didn't know Fannie, I guess.

VAR. Well, I hope she hasn't picked out another Fannie for you.

BAR. Why, say, I don't know. I don't know the girl,—say, I don't even know her name,—auntie forgot to put that in. Here, let me read to you. (*Producing letter from pocket.*) "Who do you suppose I found down here? A very distant cousin of yours,—a dear, dear girl, one of the sweetest I ever saw. I shall bring her north to Fairthorn with me, and, my dearest nephew, as I have the deepest interest in your future, I *do* hope you will *like* her *very, very much.*" "Do" is in italics, "like" in capitals, and "very, very much" has got fourteen lines under it.

VAR. What do you propose?

BAR. I don't propose at all, if I can help it. Of course I

can't go and tell auntie about Marie because that would knock everything flat in a second. But anyway, I'm going to see her and trust to luck to get some fool sort of inspiration or other to help me out. Of course, I know I'm no smarty boy, but I hope I can pull around auntie some way.

(*A distant locomotive whistle sounds outside.*)

HEAT. There's the seven o'clock express out.

BAR. The carriage ought to be here in a moment then, if I'm to catch the seven-twenty in.

HEAT. (*coming around and helping* BARRING *with his coat*). Won't you be rather late getting in?

BAR. Oh, I'll get in town for the third act, and I've seen the whole show about four thousand times. Say, I can whistle every tune in it backwards. Besides, all I care about is getting there in time to take Marie to supper. I telegraphed for a table at Sherry's, so I'll be all right.

(*Sound of carriage wheels outside.*)

VAR. There's the carriage.

Enter JACKSON L., *with bag of golf clubs.*

JACK. Your clubs, sir.

BAR. All right, thanks. Well, good-bye, old fellows. I must trot.

VAR. (*shaking hands*). Good-bye, Barring. You'll be down again before long, I hope?

BAR. Oh, yes, you expect auntie by the end of next week, —don't you? And I suppose I'll have to tag along then, anyway. Good-bye, Heaton, old chap.

HEAT. Good-bye, Barring. Kind of a nasty night to go out. These spring rains are extra wet.

BAR. (*moving towards the door, which* VARTRAY *opens for him*). But, say, just think how much nicer it will be in town. Good-bye, good-bye!

HEAT. AND VAR. Good-bye!

[*Exit* BARRING *door* C., JACKSON *following with his case and golf bag.*

HEAT. Lord! how the chap does rattle on.

(*Crossing to chair in front of fireplace.*)

VAR. (*reseating himself, and picking up newspaper*). Well,

he's all right though. There's a good, honest heart pumping in his little chest, even if he isn't top-heavy with brains.

HEAT. You're right,—nobody can help liking the fellow.

(JACKSON *reenters* C., *brushes off his shoulders, as if they were wet, and then goes out* L. *A pause.* VARTRAY *reads and* HEATON *smokes, gazing into the fire. Then* HEATON *sighs.*)

HEAT. Barring's right. This *is* beastly dull here.

VAR. (*putting down his paper and crossing to take a chair on the opposite side of the fire from* HEATON). Well, a little rest will do us both good. There's very little to complain of. The work isn't too heavy, the pay is good, and there's almost no worry.

HEAT. Fact.

VAR. If it wasn't for those confounded jewels of Mrs. Compton's in the tin safe there, I shouldn't worry at all.

HEAT. What the deuce she wants to keep them here for is more than I understand.

VAR. I suppose it's on the principle that any would-be burglar would expect her to keep them at her town house, and not in this out-of-the-way spot.

HEAT. Why doesn't she patronize a safe deposit company?

VAR. The way she was brought up, Jimmy. Her people, I understand, were peculiar to the verge of eccentricity. The kind, you know, that kept their money in an old stocking on the top shelf of the kitchen closet. Thought it was safer there where they could put hands on it than in a bank.

HEAT. Well, you've got the only keys, and they live with you night and day.

VAR. Keys! It wouldn't take anything more than a cannon-cracker to blow that old safe inside out, and besides,—I think I could pick that lock myself with nothing more formidable than a hairpin. That safe came over in the Mayflower and has been handed down in the family ever since. With all her money, it would break her heart to buy a new one as long as that can stand on its legs.

HEAT. Well, I guess we don't need to borrow trouble.

(*Door-bell rings.*)

VAR. (*surprised*). Hello!

HEAT. What is it?

VAR. The front door-bell. No wonder you don't know it; it's the first time I've heard it this season.

HEAT. Visitors?

VAR. Hardly, this kind of a night.

Enter JACKSON, L.

JACK. Two ladies, sir, inquiring for the manager of the estate.

HEAT. Ladies?

VAR. You'll have to show them right in here, the parlor hasn't been opened yet. Present our excuses. We will see them as soon as we have had time to run up and put on our jackets.

JACK. Where shall I tell the driver to put their trunks?

VAR. Their what?

HEAT. Have them register, Jackson, and show them to third floor, left, room forty-two.

VAR. No joking, Jimmy. Trunks with them?

JACK. Yes, sir.

VAR. I guess they must have come to the wrong place. Tell the driver just to drive under shelter in the shed until further orders. Come on, Jimmy. *Exit* JACKSON L.

HEAT. All right. "For this relief, much thanks." If this isn't a hotel, we shall have to make it into one.

[*Exeunt* VARTRAY *and* HEATON R.

JACKSON *returns , ushering in* ETHEL DURAND *and* MARGARET ROSWELL.

JACK. Mr. Vartray will be here in a few minutes, madam.

[*Exit* L.

MISS DURAND. Very well. There is no hurry.

MISS ROSWELL. Thank goodness we are here. There's nothing very pleasant about a journey over the Long Island railroads or the Long Island mud-roads in this weather. I can't conceive, anyway, why Mrs. Compton should have asked you to come down ahead of her to open the house, when the servants could have done it just as well.

MISS DUR. (*wandering about the room and inspecting the pictures, etc.*). She didn't ask me to.

MISS R. (*sitting in front of the fire and warming her hands*). Then may I venture to ask what induced you to come down to this forsaken place at this time of year, to say nothing of dragging long suffering me with you?

Miss Dur. (*sitting in* Vartray's *big chair, and talking across the table to* Miss Roswell). Why yes, I'll tell you. You know I am a distant relation of Mrs. Compton's,—something like thirty-ninth cousin, I believe. I never took time to reckon it out. Of course you know that papa left us next to nothing when he died a year ago, and so I had to go South with the DeBards, as governess for their children. Who should come to our hotel at Pinehurst but Mrs. Compton. When she found out who I was, she claimed the relationship at once, and nothing would do but I must give up my place and be her companion. She offered me considerably more than the DeBards could, and so, of course, I went to her,—the DeBard children weren't particularly pleasant as a steady diet, anyway. Mrs. Compton has been very kind to me all winter. The pay was liberal, but aside from that, she has loaded me with gifts and attentions of every sort, so of course I feel under considerable obligations to her. As soon, however, as it began to be time to think of coming North again, she commenced to talk about a favorite nephew of hers. It seems he must be dependent on her, the same as I am. She hasn't said anything direct,—in fact she hasn't even mentioned his name to me, merely contenting herself with telling about the virtues of her "dear nephew," her "dearest nephew," and her "darling nephew." She has hinted very strongly that said "dearest nephew" ought to get married and settle down, from which you can draw your own conclusions.

Miss R. You gather, then, that she wouldn't be at all averse to his settling down with you?

Miss Dur. Modesty forbids me to say so, but such is the case.

Miss R. And your idea is to have a little time in order to size up the lad without Mrs. Compton's assistance?

Miss. Dur. Exactly. So I came here,—he manages "Fairthorn" for Mrs. Compton.

Miss R. Supposing he knows your name,—of course he'll understand what you came for. I imagine she has hinted to him too.

Miss Dur. Oh, I'm confident from the fact that she never told me his name, that she has never told him my name.

Miss R. Then how can you be sure of your man, if you don't know his name?

Miss Dur. Didn't you hear me ask for the manager of the estate?

MISS R. But supposing there was more than one manager?

VARTRAY *enters* R., *unobserved by the ladies. His appearance is considerably more formal than before.*

MISS DUR. Stop your questions, goosey,—of course there's only one. Let me see, what did the servant say his name was,—Vartray?

MISS R. Yes, Vartray,—uncommon name, isn't it?

VAR. Elphron Vartray, at your service. Uncommon first name, too, isn't it?

MISS R. (*rising*). Oh,—I beg your pardon!

MISS DUR. (*also rising*). I am sure we didn't see you. Mr. Vartray, I presume? (VARTRAY *bows.*) I am Miss Durand, and this is my friend Miss Roswell. I am Mrs. Compton's companion, and have come down to put the house in order for her arrival next week. You got my telegram saying I would come to-night?

VAR. No, it probably reached the village, but country delivery is very uncertain, especially on such a stormy day as this has been. I am very glad to see you, though. I can of course have the grounds prepared, and order the servants to fix the house, but it needs some better feminine taste than Mrs. McGillion's to have things in shape the way I like them.

MISS DUR. I am afraid we shall put you to considerable trouble then, if you didn't expect us.

VAR. Oh no. I shall have to trust you to Mrs. McGillion's tender mercies, but I guess she can prepare the guest's chamber for you all right. (*Rings bell.*) Have you had any supper?

MISS DUR. Not a bite.

MISS R. Simply starved!

VAR. I fear that the dining-table is all cleaned off. It will only take a few minutes to have it re-set though.

MISS DUR. I think if you will excuse us, we will say good-night now. We are pretty tired after traveling all day, and if the housekeeper can send up something for us to eat, we won't come down again at all.

MRS. MCGILLION *enters* L.

VAR. Very well, if you wish it. Mrs. McGillion, this is Mrs. Compton's companion Miss Durand, and Miss Roswell. Show them to the guest's chamber, please, and send them up some hot supper as soon as cook can prepare it.

MRS. MCGILLION. Very well, sir. If you'll follow me, please, Miss Durand. (*Picks up* MISS DURAND'S *bag which is near wall* L., *but does not see* MISS ROSWELL'S *bag which is behind the table from her.*)

MISS DUR. (*offering her hand*). Well, good-night, Mr. Vartray. You are very kind to us.

VAR. Not at all. Good-night, Miss Roswell. (*Shakes hands with her.*) Pleasant dreams both, and I hope we shall have a pleasant morning to show you to-morrow.

MISS DUR. Thank you,—good-night.

(*The ladies follow* MRS. MCGILLION *out* L.)

VAR. Funny Mrs. Compton didn't write me that she was going to send on Miss Durand to open the house. Perhaps she wrote Leonard though, as long as he's officially manager, and he forgot to tell me.

HEATON *enters* R. *with a laboredly careless "going-to-meet-company" air. Looks about and sees that the ladies are gone.*

HEAT. (*surprised and disappointed*). Where are they?

VAR. The ladies? (*Points upward.*) You might as well wipe off that winning smile of yours; it won't take any tricks to-night. The ladies are tired and have gone off to bye-low already. You took too long for prinking.

HEAT. Tough luck, isn't it? Cheer up, I guess they will last until morning. Who are they, anyway?

VAR. A Miss Durand who seems to be a sort of companion to Mrs. Compton and has come down to open the house, and a friend,—let's see—Rockwell, or Rowell, or something like that.

HEAT. Did you know they were coming?

VAR. No,—if I had I should have told you, of course.

HEAT. Well, I suppose they stay?

VAR. Of course.

HEAT. Gott sei dank! Sort of a metropolitan oasis in our suburban desert, eh?

VAR. Speaking of their staying, I must see after their trunks. I suppose the team is still out under the shed.

[*Exit* VARTRAY L.

HEAT. My, my, but this is luck. I hope the dear children will turn out as handsome as they were unexpected.

VARTRAY *reenters* L. *with lighted lantern: he has a cap on and his coat collar turned up.*

HEAT. Why don't you send Jackson?

VAR. No, I'd rather look out for them myself.

[*Exit* VARTRAY C.

HEAT. (*crossing to front of fireplace and surveying himself in mirror over the mantel*). Well, here's to bed. I don't believe there's anything more brilliant to do, and I'll hope from some pleasant dreams of the morrow. (*Adjusting his tie critically.*) To think that your uncle Jamesy should have spent just two minutes too long in fixing his little bow, so that he has to postpone meeting the dears for at least twelve hours. Especially, too, as he hasn't seen anything feminine for at least a month! (*Yawning and stretching.*) Ho, hum!

MISS ROSWELL *enters* L.

MISS R. Oh, pardon me,—I didn't know there was anybody here. I forgot to take my bag up-stairs, so I came after it.

HEAT. (*whirling around at the voice*). Margaret!

MISS R. (*startled*). Jimmy! Mr. Heaton!

HEAT. For goodness sake, Margaret, what brings you here?

MISS R. (*coldly*). I'm after my bag, Mr. Heaton.

HEAT. (*recovering his self-possession and imitating her*). Oh, certainly, Miss Roswell. (*Picks up bag and hands it to her.*) Allow me.

MISS R. Thank you, Mr. Heaton. (*Going.*) Good-night!

HEAT. See here, Margaret, don't go like this. Let me explain,—I don't know just what, but anything you want explained. Don't you see that chance has thrown us together in this out-of-the-way place? What else could it be for?

MISS R. There is nothing to explain, Mr. Heaton, nothing that admits of explanation.

HEAT. Oh Lord, do you think it's fair? On my honor, I haven't the remotest idea of what the trouble between us is. Only tell me, and give me a chance to set myself right in your eyes, if I need to.

MISS R. What's the use? I know that I am perfectly justified and right in treating you as I have.

HEAT. Right? Justified? Seems to me your ideas on the

subject must be rather peculiar. Only give me a chance. Here I've been tearing my heart out for the last six months, ever since ——

(VARTRAY'S *step outside.*)

MISS R. Somebody is coming. Pray don't advertise our personal affairs so publicly.

(VARTRAY *enters back.* HEATON *falls back to table.*)

VAR. Beastly wet rain, Heaton. I'm soaked just in this short trip. (*Noticing* MISS ROSWELL.) Oh, I didn't see you. Can I help you in any way?

MISS R. No thank you, I just came after my bag.

VAR. (*looking from one to the other*). Any trouble?

HEAT. (*surly*). No.

MISS R. Trouble?—why of course not. Good-night, Mr. Vartray.

VAR. Good-night again, Miss Roswell.

[*Exit* MISS ROSWELL, L.

HEAT. (*shortly*). Well, I'm for bed.

VAR. Hum,—if you two had known each other, I should say that you were right in the midst of a first-class row. Did you introduce yourself?

HEAT. Introduce myself? Bah,—I didn't need to. Good-night. [*Exit* HEATON R.

VAR. (*whistling*). Whew! Considering the length of their acquaintance, they seemed to have picked up a very healthy quarrel. (*He goes about covering the fire, pulling shades, etc.*) Deserted and alone! I'm too tired to read, so I don't see but bed is my only refuge. (*Standing in front of safe.*) Well, good-night, old dime savings bank, and may you rest in peace. I've a good mind to kick your ugly old lock off, and then Mrs. Compton would feel obliged to get a new one. (*Crosses to behind table; looks about.*) All right and tight, I guess. (*Blows out the light. The room is entirely dark, except for the flickers from the fire.* N. B. *All house lights out, as well as the stage lights. He gropes his way out* R., *whistling softly. After a minute he is heard to stumble and there is a sharp hiss and a cat-call.*)

VARTRAY'S VOICE. Confound that cat! (*Yawning.*) Ho, hum. (*His footsteps gradually recede up the stairs, as the curtain slowly descends, and rises again after a short pause.*)

SCENE II.—*The same. Midnight, the same night. The fire has died out, and the darkness is complete. The curtain rises slowly. A house clock strikes twelve. Stealthy footsteps and the breathing of some person can be heard at the door,* L. *After a moment a dark-lantern is opened, the light being directed at the writing-desk. The person opens the desk, the lid being of the kind which swings down on hinges to form the writing-table, and places the lantern on the desk, so as to light the pigeon holes. The lantern is on the opposite edge of the table to the person, facing half towards the back, and the light shows it to be* JACKSON, *clad in a tight-fitting, close buttoned old jacket, the collar turned up; on his head is a dark skull cap.*

JACK. (*muttering to himself*). H'm,—this must be Mrs. Compton's private pigeon-hole, the only one with a lock. (*Producing bunch of keys.*) I shouldn't wonder if this one would do it,—it's really a shame to let 'em sell desks with toy locks like this,—anythin' will open 'em, from a harmonica to a fork. (*Tries the key; it does not work.*) Didn't guess right, eh? (*Tries another; same result.*) Third time will fetch it, sure,—fool's luck! (*The third key opens the drawer.*) Ah! (*He feels in the drawer.*) Damn! (*Goes through the drawer carefully.*) Not a key here. Mrs. Crompton must 'a' taken 'em with her when she went South,—I know they were here last summer. Well, I suppose I must pick the old lock, then, though I did hope to open it like a gentleman. (*Lowers his lantern to examine the safe lock, leaving the desk and drawer open.*) H'm—I guess that won't be much of a job. (*Sets lantern on floor, and gets down himself, throwing his cap on floor so that he may get his head close to the safe.*) I guess it won't take long, either, though Lord knows there's time enough and to spare in this neighborhood. The loneliness here is enough to drive any man to steal or somethin' else, if just for the excitement. (*Produces skeleton wire keys and works at lock.*) H'm,—let's see! (*Pushes hard at the key; his hand slips and he falls against the safe.*) Ouch! banged my eye, and cut my hand! Hanged if I won't fetch her next try just out of spite. (*Works at the lock again; it turns; he throws the door open.*) Hooray! Now let's see what comes first. (*Takes out a small drawer, and lifts diamond brooch from it; holds brooch so that it sparkles in the lantern light.*) That's not a bad looking bit of jewels, eh? What next?

(*Lays brooch on floor.*) Well —— (*The front door-bell rings.* JACKSON *surprised and startled.*) Whats that? (*Slams drawer into safe; throws door shut.*) What can it mean? (*Sees brooch on floor.*) Confound it! I didn't get this in. (*Springs up, with brooch and lantern in hand.*) What shall I do with it? Pocket? No, not safe. (*Glances round; notices open desk.*) Just the place,—they'll never look there for it, and I can get it to-morrow with luck. (*Throws brooch into the drawer; locks drawer, closes desk, gives final glance about the room, shuts the lantern, and rushes off,* L. *The door-bell rings again. After a moment* VARTRAY *enters in trousers, slippers, and dressing jacket, and carrying a candle, followed by* HEATON *in a bath-robe and also carrying a candle.*)

VAR. (*crossing to door* L.). Now what crazy idiot is ringing that bell at this time of night?

(*The blinds outside the large window rattle.*)

HEAT. (*whispering*). Sh! somebody is trying the blinds!

VAR. (*blows out his candle instantly*). Quick, hold your light. (*He opens the desk and takes a revolver from a drawer.*) Now then, hide behind the table there and screen your candle, and we'll be ready for him.

(HEATON *crouches down in front of the table, setting the candle on the floor and screening the flame with his hands.* VARTRAY, *with the revolver, flattens himself against the back wall just to the* L. *of the window. The person outside succeeds in opening the blinds, slips the window catch with a knife, and opens the window. He then passes in a suit-case, and steps in, moving forward and a little to the left gropingly. He is clad in clerical garments, which are a little bedraggled for being out in the wet.*)

THE PERSON. Rather an unceremonious way of dropping in on one's friends. However, I'm sure the circumstances will offer my excuses. I wonder if I have a dry match. (*Feels in his pockets.*)

VAR. (*who has moved in front of the window as soon as the stranger passed into the room*). Now, Heaton. (HEATON *stands up, uncovering the light; the stranger starts in surprise;* VARTRAY *covers him with the revolver.*) Hands up, if you please!

THE PERSON. Allow me, my dear sir,—to explain. I am ——

VAR. Up with them first, and explain afterwards.

THE PERSON. But, my dear sir,—I am the Bishop ——

VAR. Heaton, take that rope off your bath-robe and tie his hands.

HEAT. But, Elly boy, supposing the girls come down,—think of my figure!

VAR. No matter then,—I'll call Jackson! (*Calling.*) Jackson! Jackson!

THE PERSON. Rather than inconvenience the gentleman, I will comply with your request. (*Holds up his hands.*) Now, if I may speak, I am quite sure that I am right in saying that this is Mrs. Helen Compton's house. Mrs. Compton is a very dear friend of mine. I do not know either of you, but perhaps you may have heard her speak of me. I am the Bisbop of Hoboken.

HEAT. I'm sorry we haven't a job lot of weddings or funerals we can set you to work on to-night, but if you'll stay to breakfast we'll let you try your hand at grace.

VAR. Jimmy! May I ask, sir, if it is fair to ask me to believe that?

THE BISHOP. Fair or not, sir, I must ask you to. Look at my dress,—look at the suit-case. I ——

(MISS ROSWELL *rushes in*, L., *in a kimono followed by* MISS DURAND.)

MISS R. (*running across and throwing herself into* HEATON'S *arms*). Oh, Jimmy dear, what's the matter?

MISS DUR. Mr. Vartray, what *is* going on?

THE BISHOP. Miss Durand! *You* here?

MISS DUR. Bishop Lowell!

THE BISHOP. You see, sir.

VAR. (*pitching the revolver on to the table*). I beg your pardon,—but you will admit the appearances were against you.

(JACKSON *comes in*, L. *He has removed the coat.*)

JACK. You called me, sir?

VAR. Yes, but no matter now. Wait though,—you may light the lamp.

MISS DUR. Mr. Vartray, this is Bishop Lowell, a great friend of Mrs. Compton.

THE BISHOP (*shaking hands with* VARTRAY). I am glad to meet you, Mr. Vartray, though in this rather unceremonious fashion.

VAR. Pray don't mention it,—of course you have some perfectly rational explanation.

MISS DUR. And now you know each other, perhaps, considering the hour, circumstances, and the costume, it would be well for us to leave you to your explanations. Coming, Margaret?

MISS R. (*who has remained throughout the scene safely protected in* HEATON'S *arms*). Certainly. (*Sternly.*) Mr. Heaton, will you release me at once?

HEAT. Oh, I say, I like that! (*He steps back.*) Anybody would think that I had whistled for you to come!

MISS R. Mr. Heaton! (*She takes a step, and then stands, drawing one foot up under her.*) Oh;—come here a minute, Ethel. (*She whispers to her.*)

MISS DUR. (*looking at bottom of* MISS ROSWELL'S *kimono, behind which her feet are hidden*). You poor girl! They must be nearly frozen. Gentlemen, will you oblige us? Attention! (*The three men come to attention.*) About face! (*The men face about simultaneously.*) Now, Margaret, scoot! (*The girls scamper off,* L.)

JACK. (*who has finished lighting the lamp*). Shall I show his Grace to a room, sir?

THE BISHOP. Ah, Jackson, you still here? (*Shakes hands with him.*) I am glad to see you are still steady. Everything going all right?

JACK. Yes, thank you, sir.

VAR. I'm afraid you must be pretty wet, sir, if you have been out in the storm. Take him right into our chamber, Jackson, and give him some good coarse towels for a rub-down.

THE BISHOP. Oh, I couldn't think of turning you out.

VAR. Oh, Heaton and I can camp down here without the least inconvenience, and our chamber is the only room warmed. You see the house isn't opened as yet, as Mrs. Compton doesn't come down until next week.

THE BISHOP. Ah, indeed! There's where I made a mistake. I was at a confirmation at Flushing, and being so near, I thought I would come over and spend the night at Mrs. Compton's here, as I have done many times before. My carriage broke down, and in consequence I was delayed until this hour in getting here, as I had to walk the last three or four miles. When I found the house locked I thought of course that you had all gone to bed, and failing to rouse anybody

with the door-bell, I thought I could get in without disturbing anybody, but evidently I miscalculated. No wonder you took me for a burglar. How fortunate that Miss Durand chanced to be here, for if neither she nor Mrs. Compton had been here to identify me, I could hardly have blamed you for turning me over to the authorities.

JACK. You forget me, sir.

THE BISHOP. You're right, Jackson,—you would have saved me in any event. Now if you'll take my traps, please. Good-night, Mr. Vartray and Mr. ?

VAR. Pardon me,—I forgot that I hadn't introduced you. Mr. Heaton, Bishop Lowell.

THE BISHOP (*shaking hands*). And Mr. Heaton. Really, I am very sorry to have disturbed you so, and then to add insult to injury by turning you out of your room.

HEAT. Don't apologize, sir, for introducing a little excitement into the unbroken monotony of these back woods.

VAR. And as for the room, camping down here is rather a lark for us,—eh, Jimmy?

BISHOP. You are very kind, indeed. Good-night.

HEAT. AND VAR. Good-night.

(BISHOP *follows* JACKSON *out* R.)

HEAT. Call this place dull! It's been one round of gayety ever since supper!

VAR. Well I guess we've had about all that's coming to us to-night. Shall I douse the light?

HEAT. (*picking up cushion from big chair to use for a pillow*). Wait a minute, till I pick out my particular soft spot on the floor. (*Throws down the pillow in front of safe; prepares to lie down and trips on* JACKSON'S *cap.*) Hello, what's this? (*Holds up the cap.*) It must have dropped out of the bishop's luggage.

VAR. Hum, I didn't notice any leaks in his case, and besides, it wasn't in that part of the room at all. Where was it, right there?

HEAT. Yes, right in front of the safe here.

(*Crosses to the table to examine the cap in the lamplight with* VARTRAY.)

VAR. Right in front of the safe here. (*The importance of the word strikes him.*) The safe? (*Crosses to it.*) The safe!

HEAT. What,—you don't suspect ——?

VAR. (*turning the handle*). Unlocked.

HEAT. What?—no!

VAR. (*nods*). Yes. My hand's wet. (*Holds it up.*) Blood!

HEAT. Quick,—open it! (VARTRAY *throws the door open.*) The drawer!

VAR. (*taking it out*). That's here.

HEAT. Thanks be.

VAR. (*running his hand through the drawer*). It's gone!

HEAT. The brooch?

VAR. Exactly! (*Rushes across to light with the drawer.*)

HEAT. No,—it can't be. (*Looks over* VARTRAY'S *shoulder. They hurriedly rummage through the drawer again.*)

VAR. Can't be, eh? Well, it has.

HEAT. (*emitting a long-drawn whistle of surprise and astonishment as the curtain descends*). Wh-e-w!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The same room. The lamp is gone from the table, the top of which is not so littered with papers, etc., as before. There is no fire in the fireplace, but in its place some new logs neatly piled. There are more ornaments and pictures about, and the room has a general appearance of having been "put to rights." The time is morning, about a week later than the day of the first act.*

(*As the curtain rises, laughter and a confusion of voices is heard off* R. *Then* VARTRAY'S *voice.* "*Ah, those buckwheats,—those old-fashioned, homespun, double-decked buckwheats!*")

Enter VARTRAY, MISS DURAND, HEATON *and* MISS ROSWELL, R., *talking together as they come on.*

MISS DUR. Alas, for the formality that Mrs. Compton will bring with her to-day! No more picnic breakfasts.

MISS R. Anyway, it's been the jolliest week possible while it has lasted.

HEAT. (*surreptitiously squeezing her hand*). Yes, dearie, worth all the other weeks in the year, even if for nothing more than that it gave us the chance to understand each other once more.

VAR. (*spying him*). Hold on there,—no love-making at this time in the morning, or you'll drive Miss Durand and I to it also, in pure self-defense.

MISS R. (*to* VARTRAY, *suggestively*). Well——?

MISS DUR. (*reprovingly*). Margaret!

VAR. (*extremely uncomfortable*). H'm,—er—— (*Breaking out suddenly.*) Come along, you silly chump, Heaton,—haven't we got enough to do this morning before Mrs. Compton arrives?

HEAT. Certainly, honorable boss. (*With mock politeness and a deep bow.*) Pray excuse us, ladies, while we retire to transform the gentleman-of-leisure into the hod carrier.

[*Exeunt* HEATON *and* VARTRAY.

Miss R. (*seating herself on the sofa*). So Mrs. Compton comes to-day. Come here, Ethel, and tell me what you think of your idea of coming down to observe your man for a week in advance.

Miss Dur. (*sitting beside her.*) I think it was a real inspiration.

Miss R. And what do you think of the man,—is he an inspiration, too?

Miss Dur. Why, I like Mr. Vartray very much.

Miss R. Such a nice, gentle way of putting it, too. And isn't it nice that he should like you very much, too?

Miss Dur. (*protesting*). Margaret!

Miss R. Really, Mrs. Compton is as good as a fairy godmother. Think of being regularly thrown into each other's arms!

Miss Dur. Thrown into nothing!

Miss R. It's much the same. I never heard of such an idyllic arrangement. Just look at the quarrels Jimmy and I have had, but in your case the course of true love is a regular railway.

Miss Dur. True love!—true nonsense! I have hardly known him a week yet.

Miss R. True,—but there's no telling what a fair maid of your charm and fascination can accomplish in even seven little days. Tell me, dear, how soon do you expect him to pro——

Miss Dur. Sh! For goodness sake, Margaret, stop your poor jokes. Here they come back.

Enter Vartray *and* Heaton, L. Vartray *in overalls and a tattered straw hat, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up.* Heaton, *in an old flannel shirt with no jacket or vest, and his trousers rolled, is busy filling his pipe. He has on an old slouch hat.*

Heat. Behold Apollo and his brother!

Miss R. You certainly *are* handsome in that rig, Jimmy.

Heat. (*near the door back*). Never you mind, Meggy dear, handsome is as handsome does. Come on,—we'll go down and see those chaps put the finishing touches on the doors for the box-stalls. I have to watch them every minute, or they don't seem to be able to put on a hinge right.

Var. I'm all through except for the Jacqueminot bushes that I'm going to have the men put in the south corner of the

rose garden. I think I'll write to the firm and tell them that I shall be through here to-morrow.

HEAT. What's your next assignment?

VAR. I'm not sure, but I think they will probably send me up into the Berkshires to straighten out the Bliss' garden at Lenox. It got to looking rather seedy at the end of last season.

HEAT. Well, I'll be round in time to greet the landlady. Ten-thirty, isn't it?

VAR. Ten-thirty into town, and about fifty here, allowing for the drive up. By the way, Jimmy, look in here for a minute if you can in about half-an-hour. I'd like to see you a minute.

HEAT. All right, Elly.

[*Exeunt* HEATON *and* MISS ROSWELL, C.

(VARTRAY, *who has seated himself at the writing desk begins to write.*)

MISS DUR. (*after a moment*). So you're going to-morrow, Mr. Vartray?

VAR. (*writing*). Yes, I've got to.

MISS DUR. Isn't it rather a sudden decision?

VAR. Well,—no. Of course I've known all along that I should have to go as soon as my work here was finished. I expected to get through almost a week ago, but Mrs. Compton delayed coming down, and—(*crossing to sit beside her*) well—after you came, you know, somehow I didn't mind the work,—it wasn't so dreary as it has been here, and I hated so to realize that I must go away from—from it all, that I didn't want to speak of leaving.

MISS DUR. It has been a very pleasant week, Mr. Vartray.

VAR. I only hope it's been as nice for you as it has been for me. Of course I've known my sisters all my life, and one or two of their chums, but I've never exactly had one girl left on my hands the way you've been the last week.

MISS DUR. Left on your hands! I like that!

VAR. Oh, Miss Durand,—you know I didn't mean anything by that. I mean, we've been thrown in each other's way,—no, I mean,—I mean,—well you know, I mean ——

MISS DUR. You mean, Mr. Vartray, that Jimmy and Margaret have been very much wrapped up in each other ——

VAR. Bless them!

MISS DUR. As is naturally to be expected under the circumstances, and you and I ——

VAR. You and I ——

MISS DUR. (*continuing*). Have been rather left to ourselves.

VAR. To each other, you mean, Ethel.

MISS DUR. (*repeating*). To each other, you mean,—who?

VAR. Oh, didn't you hear? I said Ethel quite distinctly.

MISS DUR. (*apparently dubious*). Um,——?

VAR. (*cheerfully audacious*). May I not? Such old friends, you know.

MISS DUR. Of course,—almost a week old! I really don't know how I can prevent you if you insist.

VAR. Oh, I insist! Nothing shall prevent me from insisting! Shake hands on it. (*They shake.*) And will you call me Elphron?

MISS DUR. Certainly not.

VAR. (*surprised, but still retaining her hand*). Why,—why ——

MISS DUR. Because I think it's an abominably homely name. How do you like Bobby?

VAR. That's the only name I ever loved, except Eth ——

MISS DUR. No exceptions! Then Bobby it shall be.

VAR. Bobby it is. Shake hands on that, too.

MISS DUR. But we haven't stopped shaking hands the first time yet, Bobby.

VAR. But we each have a hand left, Ethel. (*Extends his left hand to her across their clasped hands; she accepts it.*)

MISS DUR. Foolish!

VAR. Ridiculous! (*Leaning forward and laughing into her eyes.*) And now is there any further ——

(BARRING, *in light summer suit and straw hat, carrying his bag of clubs, enters abruptly*, C. VARTRAY *and* MISS DURAND *start up embarrassed.*)

BAR. (*as confused as the others, removes his hat, bows awkwardly, starts back*). Oh, beg pardon. (*Backing.*) Didn't know any one—thought you would be,—excuse me!

VAR. (*recovering*). Why, how do you do, Barring? Glad to see you back again; but I didn't expect you before Mrs. Compton.

BAR. No, I guess I *was* kind of unexpected.

VAR. Miss Durand, allow me to present Mr. Barring, Mrs. Compton's nephew and manager of the estate here.

MISS DUR. (*too surprised to acknowledge the introduction*). What,—manager of "Fairthorn"! *You're* not the manager?

VAR. Why no,—I'm only the landscape gardener.

BAR. You see it's this way. I'm a good deal of a duffer, you know, and so Vartray has been good enough to kind of look out for things in general, although you'll find "manager" after my name on the pay-roll.

MISS DUR. Then *you're* the one Mrs. Compton told me so much about?

BAR. Awfully nice of her, wasn't it?

MISS DUR. (*to* VARTRAY). And you're not the manager after all?

VAR. Why, no,—of course not. But what of it anyway?

MISS DUR. Good heavens! (*Rushes off* L.)

BAR. Seemed real pleased to see me, didn't she?

VAR. I can't imagine what is the matter with her.

BAR. Who is she, anyway?

VAR. She's a distant cousin of Mrs. Compton's who has been with her in the South this winter. She came on a week in advance to help put the house in order for Mrs. Compton's arrival.

BAR. Oh,—(*grabbing him by the arm*) I say, Vartray,—I know who she is. It's that "dear, dear girl,"—don't you know, the one auntie picked up down at Pinehurst,—the one she wrote to me about so much,—you know, the girl she wanted to throw me at. What's her name?

VAR. Durand.

BAR. Auntie had never told me that. But what do you suppose she was so anxious about your being the manager here for?

VAR. (*thinking*). Manager,—by Jove, I'll bet I know why. You say Mrs. Compton never told you Miss Durand's name?

BAR. Auntie is kind of forgetful sometimes, you know.

VAR. Then I'll bet she never told Miss Durand your name. All she knew was that you were the manager of the estate, and coming here to find me in charge she naturally mistook me for you.

BAR. What a lark!

VAR. And so she's been nice to me all this week, and let

me,—well, let me get interested but just because she thought it was you all the time!

BAR. Oh, I say, sort of pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for me,—you're the cat and I'm the monkey, eh?

VAR. Not much,—I'm monkey enough for both.

BAR. But I say,—ha! he! isn't it a bully joke?

VAR. (*his indignation rising*). Joke!—joke! The devil! (*Rushes off* C.)

BAR. Say,—I don't seem to be exactly popular this morning. Guess I'll run up and put on my business suit,—I thought it might make a good impression on Aunt Nellie if I got here first and looked a little busy when she showed up. (*The front door-bell rings.*) Bah Jove, I hope that isn't her already! Trot up, Lenny boy.

(*Picks up his clubs and hurries off* C.)

JACKSON *enters* L., *ushering in* MARIE DEMARQUE; *she is dressed in a plain black gown, a la saleslady; over her face a very thick black veil.*

JACK. You're sure, ma'am, the ladies would wish to see you?

MISS DEMARQUE. Of course,—I am Madame LeClerq's head assistant, and had an appointment to measure them.

JACK. Oh, very well,—I hadn't heard them mention it.

MISS DEM. There are a good many things you're not supposed to hear.

JACK. (*ruffled*). Humph,—indeed! Sit down. Perhaps I can find them. [*Exit* C.

(*As soon as she is sure that* JACKSON *is safely out* MISS DEMARQUE *goes about making a careful inspection of the various articles about the room, raising her veil to do so. The excellent pictures and other evidences of good taste and ample means shown by the various articles in the room evidently meet with her approval. She finally examines the appointments of the writing-desk, standing back to the door* C.)

VARTRAY *enters quietly, unobserved, by door* C.

MISS DEM. (*examining the small clock which stands on top of the desk*). My,—but somebody had to put out good money

for all of these things,—I wonder what chance Lenny has of coming in for ——

VAR. Do I intrude?

MISS DEM. (*drops the clock, and wheels about with a half-scream*). Oh! (*Hastily pulls down her veil.*)

VAR. You are ——?

MISS DEM. (*recovering her composure*). Madame LeClerq's assistant. I had an appointment to measure Mrs. Compton for a new summer suit, but your butler tells me that she has not come as yet. I was just going.

VAR. The,—er,—the clock was going, too?

MISS DEM. Sir!—Really, I must go.

(*She starts for the door* C.)

VAR. (*backing against the door*). Must?

MISS DEM. Yes,—I will come again to-morrow.

(*She starts out* L.)

VAR. My dear Miss Demarque,—(*she stops abruptly at her name*) now that you are here why not sit down and tell me where it is?

MISS DEM. You know me?

VAR. You weren't quite quick enough with the veil. Anybody so well known in the theatrical world as yourself must expect to be recognized, especially when there are at least fourteen pictures of you up-stairs in Mr. Barring's room.

(*He places a chair for her at the right of the desk.*)

MISS DEM. (*sitting*). Very well. What did you ask me?

VAR. (*seating himself at the desk*). I asked you how it has been disposed of?

MISS DEM. Perhaps I could tell you better if I knew what "it" was.

VAR. Oh come,—why not own up at once and save me the bother of dragging it out of you.

MISS DEM. I imagine you are insulting me, but you talk so in riddles that I am not sure.

VAR. (*after a moment's thought*). By Jove,—perhaps I am wronging you. I really can't understand why you should be connected with the case, but finding you as I did I was naturally suspicious. See here—of course you lied to me about being Madame LeClerq's assistant. Tell me honestly, now,

what you are here for, and very likely you will clear yourself of all suspicion at once.

MISS DEM. (*hesitating*). I ——

VAR. (*impatiently*). Come, the truth at once.

MISS DEM. Well, here,—as man to man. You know that Lenny has been considerably thick with me all last winter ——

VAR. Barring?

MISS DEM. Yes. Well, he has been kind enough to ask me to marry him. I really think he's in earnest, too. I merely came down here on a private hunt to see what sort of a place he lived in, and what his prospects are. Lord, he hasn't head enough to earn ten cents a week by himself. I have had enough of these offers from chappies with everything they own on their backs, and I wanted to make sure that Lenny wasn't that kind.

VAR. Really I believe you. The explanation is too frank and novel not to be true. I see that I did wrong in suspecting you, but let me explain. A week ago some jewelry of Mrs. Compton's was stolen from the safe there. I have every reason to believe that it has not been taken away from the house yet, and seeing you prying about I of course immediately suspected you of knowledge of it.

MISS DEM. (*interested at once*). Whom do you suspect?

VAR. You seem interested.

MISS DEM. (*repeating eagerly*). Whom do you suspect?

VAR. Why should I tell you?

MISS DEM. Thurston?

VAR. Who?

MISS DEM. Your butler?

VAR. You mean Jackson?

MISS DEM. Oh,—is that what he calls himself? His name is Thurston,—William Thurston.

VAR. How do you know?

MISS DEM. (*shrugs her shoulders*). My father.

VAR. (*jumps in astonishment*). What?—your name's Demarque.

MISS DEM. On the stage. My real name is Annie Thurston. He was my father for ten years, then he left us. Cowardly, of course, to leave poor mother to support both of us, but rather a relief for he was always a surly beast, when he wasn't drunk. Next we heard was robbery; jugged for ten years,—No. 782 Sing-Sing. He got out about four years ago, but Lord knows how he got this place!

HEATON *enters quietly door* C.

VAR. I can't tell you how much obliged I am to you for telling me this. It is just what I needed to help the other evidence I have.

HEAT. I beg your pardon,—I thought you were alone, Elly.

(*Starts out again.*)

VAR. Oh, don't go, Jimmy,—I want to see you particularly. Miss,—er—Miss Smith has just told me something particularly interesting and valuable to us concerning Jackson.

MISS DEM. I must go now. I'm afraid that he will come back and recognize me.

VAR. Didn't he see you when you came?

MISS DEM. Yes,—but only for a moment and with my veil down. He hasn't seen me for so long that he might not know me, but I am afraid to take any chances. (*Rises to go out* L.)

VAR. I'm sorry to be obliged to ask you to stay, but I intend to bring matters to a head very shortly,—before Mrs. Compton gets here,—and I may need your evidence.

MISS DEM. No, no,—you can't ask me to stay to condemn my own,—to —— No, no,—I'm going.

(*Starts again* L.)

VAR. I hate to appear mean after you have told me all that you have, but you must stay. Will you?

MISS DEM. No, I can't,—I won't. It's not fair to ask.

VAR. Heaton, will you please call for Barring to come down. There's a friend of his here.

MISS DEM. (*astonished and alarmed*). Leonard here?

HEAT. Why, is Barring here?

MISS DEM. (*running across and catching* HEATON'S *arm to detain him*). No, don't call. (*Turning to* VARTRAY.) I'll stay,—only don't let him know that I'm here.

VAR. I will protect you all that I can. (*Rings bell on desk.*) Well, Heaton, did you find out anything useful last night?

HEAT. I think I found out where the cap came from. Watkins is outside, and will tell you about it.

VAR. Good! Call him in.

(HEATON *steps to door to call in* WATKINS. MRS. MCGILLION *enters* R.)

VAR. Mrs. McGillion, I'm afraid Miss Smith is rather tired with her trip down here from the city. Make her a cup of tea, and let her rest in the little reception-room. See that nobody disturbs her.

MRS. McG. Very well, sir. Right this way, if you please, Miss Smith.

[*Exit* MRS. McGILLION L., *followed by* MISS DEMARQUE.

Enter WATKINS, *a large, red, awkward farm-hand, door* C.

HEAT. Now, Watkins, tell Mr. Vartray what you told me about the old red cap last night.

WATKINS (*embarrassed at being the centre of attention*). Why, sir, it's this way, sir. You see when Mr. Leonard used to play polo with the Faraway team, sir, he had some of them red caps, sir, with a white button on the top. At the end of last season, sir, he must have left it in the barn by mistake, for when I was looking round there one day I run across it. Jackson happened to be out there when I found it, sir. I was going to take it home to my little brother, but he says, "anything that's found here is mine," says he, and he bein' the boss of the servants, I give it to him.

HEAT. Could you identify it?

WAT. Could I what, sir?

HEAT. Could you tell the cap if you saw it?

WAT. Oh, yes, sir,—I think so, sir.

HEAT. (*taking the cap which* JACKSON *dropped from a drawer in the desk*). Here.

WAT. (*examining it*). Oh, yes, sir, that's it,—that's it I'm sure. See here, sir. There's "L. B.," sir, in ink on the white button. It's pretty well faded now, but he'll tell you, sir, that he put it on himself.

VAR. Very good, Watkins. You may go back to work now. [*Exit* WATKINS *door* C.

HEAT. I searched Jackson's room thoroughly yesterday, as you suggested, when you drove him down to the village for the supplies.

VAR. Yes, I meant to ask you last night about it, but the girls didn't give me a chance. Find anything?

HEAT. (*reaching in behind the sofa and producing the old jacket which* JACKSON *wore*). Here,—this was hung in the farther corner of his closet, behind all the other clothes.

VAR. (*examining it*). What about it?

HEAT. (*pointing to the lower edge, below the right hand pocket*). Blood stains?

VAR. Anybody would think this a murder case. By George, though, it looks like blood, doesn't it, and that's exactly where the cut on his hand would rub. First rate, Jimmy. It exasperates me, now, with all this circumstantial evidence, not to be able to locate the brooch.

HEAT. I'll bet it's somewhere about the house, or the grounds. The New York pawn shops haven't got it. We know that, and what with the dog sleeping outside his door every night and either you, I or Mrs. McGillion watching all day he certainly hasn't had much chance to get it away.

(*The front door bell rings.*)

VAR. If I can possibly clear this thing up before Mrs. Compton gets here I'm going to.

HEAT. What are you going to do?

VAR. I'm going to play the biggest kind of a bluff I ever tried,—there's not more than half-an-hour left. I'll call in Jackson and accuse him of the theft, and when I confront him with the cap, the jacket, the cut on his hand, and, if necessary, the lady whom you saw here, I think he'll weaken and confess. I shall promise him immunity if he will turn over the jewelry to us, so that Mrs. Compton will not know of the robbery. It would very likely get Barring into a scrape if she found out about their being stolen while he was supposed to look out for them.

HEAT. You're taking a good risk,—supposing he denies everything?

MRS. MCGILLION *enters* L.

MRS. MCG. Bishop Lowell, sir.

VAR. Ask him to step here, please. (*To* HEATON.) Did you notice how he recognized Jackson the other night, and referred to something in the past? I telegraphed him to come down in hopes that I can get something compromising Jackson from him. [*Exit* MRS. MCGILLION.

HEAT. By the way, who was the lady you were talking with when I came in?

VAR. You'll find out perhaps, and if you don't, no matter. Don't be surprised at anything I may say to Jackson.

Enter THE BISHOP.

THE BISHOP. Ah, good-morning Mr. Vartray,—Mr. Heaton.

VAR. Good-morning, Bishop Lowell. I hope you will pardon the liberty I took in telegraphing for you. I remembered you said your pastoral duties would bring you this way to-morrow, and I thought you might not mind coming a day early.

THE BISHOP. Very glad to come, Mr. Vartray. How can I be of service to you?

VAR. I wished to ask you about Jackson. What can you tell me of his past life?

THE BISHOP. His is a most interesting case. I know nothing of him until he turned up at a mission in which I am interested about four years ago. The night he drifted in I happened to be there myself. He was most intoxicated, and looked in to revile our meeting, but we labored and prayed with him, and at last succeeded. It was a most noble and Christian conversion. I gave my personal attention to it, and am exceedingly proud of the man. After strong efforts, and with—er,—with some medical assistance we broke off his drinking habit entirely, and, upon my representations, Mrs. Compton, who is interested also in this mission work, gave him his present position.

HEAT. You are,—er,—absolutely confident of the thoroughness and stability of this reformation?

THE BISHOP. I would stake my clerical reputation upon it. (*Anxiously.*) He hasn't been drinking again, has he?

HEAT. Not that I know of.

VAR. Frankly, bishop, some of Mrs. Compton's jewelry was stolen from the safe here last week, and we have every reason to suspect Jackson. All the evidence, which though circumstantial is strong, points to him.

THE BISHOP. No, no,—I won't believe it,—you must be mistaken. Remember, he was a personal convert of my own. You *must* be wrong.

HEAT. (*who has been looking out the window* C.). Here comes Jackson now.

VAR. Good,—we shall find out in a moment now who is right.

THE BISHOP. I shall remain here. My presence will at least ensure his telling the truth.

Enter JACKSON *door* C.

JACK. Beg pardon, sir. Didn't know you was busy. I was looking for the ladies, sir, for the young woman who was here, but I can't find them anywhere about the grounds.

HEAT. They've gone to town to meet Mrs. Compton.

VAR. Never mind about the ladies, Jackson. There's a little matter that you can, perhaps, help me to straighten out.

JACK. I hope so, sir.

(*Positions are as follows :* VARTRAY *in front of desk ;* JACKSON *midway between desk and table ;* HEATON *behind table ;* THE BISHOP R., *near fireplace.*)

VAR. Perhaps you may not know that there was a burglary committed here last week.

JACK. What sir,—a burglary here !

THE BISHOP. You see,—he knows nothing of it.

VAR. There was only one article stolen,—Mrs. Compton's old-fashioned diamond brooch, an heirloom which she valued very highly.

JACK. I'm sure I'm very sorry, sir.

HEAT. You'll be sorrier later on.

VAR. The job was done by an expert. The old safe lock was picked clean, and not injured at all.

JACK. I've heard, sir, that there's been a gang about here. Night before last they broke in over at the Williams'.

HEAT. Item two. That will mean an extra year.

THE BISHOP. You're not fair, Mr. Heaton. You haven't heard the man yet.

VAR. (*ringing bell which is on desk*). The burglar dropped a cap in his haste to escape,—he was evidently interrupted by the arrival of the bishop.

JACK. A cap, sir ?

VAR. (*thrusting it at him suddenly*). Yes, *this* cap. You never saw it before ?

JACK. Why no,—why should I have seen it, sir ?

HEAT. Funny Watkins should be mistaken.

Enter MRS. MCGILLION, L.

VAR. (*aside to* MRS. MCGILLION). Ask Miss Smith to step here, please. (*To* JACKSON.) In opening the safe the burglar was so unfortunate as to cut his hand.

[*Exit* MRS. MCGILLION.

HEAT. How is *your* hand, Jackson ?

THE BISHOP. I protest ——

VAR. (*interrupting*). Very carelessly he rubbed the blood off upon the edge of his jacket. (*Showing the jacket.*) See here. Of course you don't recognize the jacket?

JACK. Of course not, sir.

HEAT. Strange that it should drift into his closet.

THE BISHOP. I don't see, Mr. Vartray, but that Jackson has failed you at all points. I think ——

HEAT. One moment please, bishop. Not your funeral, you know.

VAR. See here,—for certain reasons I am very anxious that Mrs. Compton shall not learn of this theft. If you will stop lying, own up, and return the jewelry at once you may go free, Thurston.

JACK. (*taken off his guard*). What!

HEAT. Who?

THE BISHOP. Thurston?

VAR. William Thurston, late No. 782 Sing-Sing.

THE BISHOP. A criminal!

JACK. Who told you that, sir? It's a lie,—an infernal lie!

Enter MISS DEMARQUE, L.

VAR. Then you deny your daughter?

THE BISHOP. Daughter!

(MISS DEMARQUE *raises her veil and gazes squarely at* JACKSON.)

JACK. Annie! You!

HEAT. Caught, by George!

(*The front door-bell rings.*)

VAR. Come, now, tell me where it is quick! You'll go free if I get it before Mrs. Compton arrives.

JACK. (*recovering his sang-froid*). Why, sir, I didn't admit that I took it. I know nothing about it!

MISS DEM. Liar!

VAR. No fooling, now, Jackson. Is it somewhere in the house? (*No answer.*) Is it on you? (*No answer.*) Search him, Heaton.

(HEATON *proceeds to search through* JACKSON'S *pockets hurriedly.*)

THE BISHOP. I protest, Mr. Vartray. You are no officer of the law. What right have you ——

HEAT. Right be—blamed, bishop. Do you expect us to run into the city and swear out a search warrant?

(*As* HEATON *reaches for* JACKSON'S *inside jacket pocket,* JACKSON *attempts to interfere.*)

VAR. Tut, tut, Jackson, none of that. (*Takes his revolver from the desk, but does not cover* JACKSON.) Get your hands up out of the way. (HEATON *takes a paper from the pocket.*) What is it?

HEAT. (*glancing it over hastily*). His good-conduct discharge from Sing-Sing.

VAR. But don't you find the brooch?

HEAT. (*searching again*). Nothing at all.

MRS. COMPTON'S VOICE (*off* L.). Yes, I'm very glad to get back.

VAR. Mrs. Compton!

HEAT. The devil!

THE BISHOP. Sir!

MRS. COMPTON *enters,* L., *followed by* MISS DURAND *and* MISS ROSWELL. MISS DEMARQUE *flees out of door,* C.)

MRS. C. My dear bishop, so glad —— (*Noticing the situation.*) Why, why, what's the meaning of this, Mr. Vartray?

THE BISHOP. Most unfair, Mrs. Compton. Mr. Vartray accuses Jackson of ——

VAR. Pardon me, Bishop Lowell. (*To* MRS. COMPTON.) A week ago last night the lock of the old safe here was picked, and your diamond brooch stolen.

MRS. C. My brooch stolen?

VAR. Various bits of evidence pointed to Jackson as the thief, and my suspicions were confirmed when I learned, quite accidentally of his former criminal record. In the face of everything, he denies the theft. I suspect that the brooch is hidden somewhere about the house, or else on his person, and we were searching him as you came in.

MRS. C. You didn't find it?

VAR. No.

MRS. C. And the old earrings that belonged to the same set?

HEAT. There were no earrings in the safe.

MRS. C. Oh, no, I remember I carelessly left those in my private drawer in the desk when I went away last fall. (*Producing key from her bag.*) Heavens! I hope they're not gone, too. (*Unlocks the drawer, and holds up the brooch.*) Why, here's the brooch!

VAR. What,—in the drawer!

MISS DUR. Oh, how fortunate, Aunt Nellie.

HEAT. Now how in the deuce ——

JACK. Excuse me, ma'am, but there was only one key to the drawer besides yours?

MRS. C. Only one,—Mr. Vartray's.

THE BISHOP. And certainly, supposing that Jackson had some means of access to the drawer, he would never have hidden stolen property in a place to which Mr. Vartray had the key.

MRS. C. You are right, Bishop Lowell. So it seems that Mr. Vartray had the only keys except my own to both the safe and the drawer. Perhaps you will explain, Mr. Vartray, why the diamond brooch was moved from one to the other?

VAR. Explain? I've already told you all I know of the affair, Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. It seems to me highly unnecessary, Mr. Vartray, to invent a theft involving the honesty of an old and trusted servant of mine, who is vouched for by no less a person than the bishop, in order to explain so simple a matter as the movement of the brooch.

MISS DUR. (*protesting*). Why, Aunt Nellie, you don't accuse Mr. Vartray ——

HEAT. Hang it all, Mrs. Compton, look at the evidence here. The blood on the safe handle, the stains on Jackson's old jackets, the cap that belonged to your nephew, and Jackson's jail record.

THE BISHOP. The fact that he may have erred once long ago does not prove anything now, Mr. Heaton.

MRS. C. And you do not take into account the wonderful effect of the bishop's conversion of him.

HEAT. Conversion be ——

VAR. Sh! Jimmy boy. You have been so good, Mrs. Compton, as to accuse me of the lie direct. I hope before long to be able to prove the truth of what I have said. It is hardly necessary for me to say that I shall leave at once.

[*Exit* VARTRAY, R.

HEAT. And it's absolutely unnecessary for me to state that I shall go even sooner than that. Are you coming, Madge?

MISS DUR. No, no,—you mustn't go, Margaret.

MISS R. Really, Ethel, I'm sorry to desert you, for I have had an awfully pleasant week here, but this affair is so personal that I think I had better go home at once.

MISS DUR. No, no,—don't go. Stay, and I'm sure this will all straighten out right. Aunt Nellie is too much influenced by her belief in the bishop's infallibility, and consequently in Jackson's. You will like her ever so much after you have met her.

MISS R. Really, Ethel, if you don't mind, I hardly think I care to meet her.

[*Exeunt* HEATON *and* MISS ROSWELL, R.

(*During this scene between the two ladies,* MRS. COMPTON *and* THE BISHOP *have been conversing together at the* R. *forward.*)

MRS. C. And now if you will excuse me a few moments while I speak to Ethel, I will join you on the piazza and we will go over the grounds and see my new gardens and the stable.

THE BISHOP. Certainly, my dear Mrs. Compton. I shall expect you in ten minutes, say?

MRS. C. Yes, in about that time. You need not wait, Jackson. [*Exeunt* THE BISHOP, C., *and* JACKSON, L.

MISS DUR. Aunt Nellie, why did you accuse Mr. Vartray so unjustly? You wouldn't even listen to the evidence he had.

MRS. C. Really it seemed a most unlikely story. It is enough for me that the bishop supports Jackson and believes in his integrity.

MISS DUR. Oh, the bishop is all very well, but it seems to me that he would make fewer mistakes if he wasn't so cocksure of his own infallibility.

MRS. C. Not a word against the bishop, my dear,—he is a great and good man. Let us drop the subject. Tell me, how have you liked my nephew?

MISS DUR. Your nephew? Why, he ——

(BARRING *runs in,* R., *with a glad smile, and hastens to embrace* MRS. COMPTON.)

BAR. *Dear* Aunt Nellie, so glad to see you back again.

MRS. C. Why, Leonard, my boy, I wondered where you were.

BAR. So sorry, Aunt Nellie. I came in to change my clothes so as to look a little presentable when you came, and, by Jove, do you know, first thing I knew I was fast asleep. Took a little nap, you know. So sorry!

MRS. C. Poor boy, you must have been working so hard! I'm afraid you can't have had any time to be polite to Ethel the last week.

(BARRING *winks violently at* MISS DURAND *over* MRS. COMPTON'S *shoulder.*)

MISS DUR. Why, he's been very kind to me, Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. I'm so glad. But now I must go out to the bishop. (*Suggestively.*) Of course you don't mind being left alone together?

BAR. Oh, delighted, I'm sure, dear auntie.

MRS. C. Well, good-bye for a little while. I know you won't be lonesome if I do leave. (*Laughs coquettishly.*)

[*Exit* MRS. COMPTON, L.

BAR. Say, it was awfully good of you, you know, saying what you did,—about my being nice to you last week, you know.

MISS DUR. Well, you were as nice as you had the opportunity of being.

BAR. Say, after all, considering what I saw this morning——

MISS DUR. Mr. Barring!

BAR. Oh, I don't mean anything, you know; it's just my little joke. Considering what I—well, what I didn't see this morning, perhaps I was nice as I could be to you by staying away.

MISS DUR. Perhaps you were.

BAR. And say,—has,—has auntie been hinting anything to you?

MISS DUR. Hinting?

BAR. About me, you know. She's been hinting barrels about you to me.

MISS DUR. Nothing bad, I hope?

BAR. Why of course not. Wants me to marry you, you know.

MISS DUR. How good of her.

BAR. Say, you're an awfully nice girl, you know, and all that,—but I *can't*, you know. 'Nother girl, you know.

MISS DUR. So nice of you to be frank, Mr. Barring. To tell the truth I can't, either.

BAR. (*delighted*). What? Couldn't you? Say, you're a brick! Shake hands! (*They do so.*) Is it another girl in your case,—I mean another man?

MISS DUR. That's my secret, Mr. Barring.

BAR. Well say, it's awfully jolly of you, anyway. You're a dead nice girl,—you are really, by Jove! I'm going right up and write to Marie this minute. (*Starts* R.)

MISS DUR. I don't know her, but you'll give her my love, won't you?

BAR. Of course I will. Say, (*rushing back and shaking her hand again*) thanks again, thanks awfully. Good-bye. (*Runs off* R.)

HEAT. (*outside* R). All ready, Madgie? The sooner we get away from that old fool of a woman the happier I shall be.

Enter HEATON, R., *followed by* MISS ROSWELL, *who is talking as they come on. They are dressed to go away, and* HEATON *carries both their suit-cases.*

MISS R. That isn't nice to say of Mrs. Compton, Jimmy. She hasn't done you any harm.

HEAT. Fact. But judging by the way she treated Vartray it's only because she hasn't had time.

MISS DUR. Are you really going, Margaret?

MISS R. Yes, dear, I must. You know I only agreed to stay until Mrs. Compton came, and judging by what little I have seen of her I hardly care to stop and meet her.

MISS DUR. I can hardly blame you. She certainly was very mean and unfair towards Mr. Vartray, and I didn't expect it of her either. She has seemed just and pleasant enough in the South all winter, and I can't see why she should have acted so, except that she is influenced completely by her belief in the bishop's infallibility.

HEAT. Say, that's right. I think that his Smugness would queer anybody, if you gave him time.

MISS R. Good-bye, dear. We shall have to go along to get the twelve o'clock in.

MISS DUR. Well, I shall be in town to see you before long.

Thank you ever so much for coming down the past week with me. Good-bye. (*The ladies kiss each other.*)

HEAT. (*sticking his mouth up between them*). Now, now,—don't forget your Uncle Jimmy.

MISS DUR. *I* shan't kiss you!

Enter VARTRAY R., *with his suit-case.*

HEAT. Funny, Madgie has the same complaint. Good-bye, Miss Durand. I know we shall see you again in the city. (*Shakes her hand.*) We'll see you at the train, Elly,—I'm going in as far as the city with Margaret. Come on, dear, we don't get the carriage, it's a good mile into the station, and you're no express train at hitting the pike. (*General "Good-byes."*) [*Exeunt* HEATON *and* MISS ROSWELL C.

VAR. Well, good-bye, Ethel. (*Offers his hand.*)

MISS DUR. (*putting hers in it*). Oh, Bobby, surely you don't think that I believed anything that Mrs. Compton said?

VAR. I hope not, Ethel. I'm going to do my best to prove to her how entirely mistaken she and the bishop are.

MISS DUR. I know you can, Bobby, I know you can.

VAR. And when I've cleared myself absolutely may I come back and find you again?

MISS DUR. You needn't wait for that,—I've told you that I believe in you entirely.

VAR. Thank you; but as long as you are to stay with Mrs. Compton I prefer first to stand clear in her eyes too.

MISS DUR. You're right, Bobby, you're right. Oh, but you must hurry now or you will lose the train. Good-bye!

VAR. (*with both her hands in his*). Good-bye, girl,—and remember, when I do come back I won't promise to go away again ever. (*Drops her hands, picks up case and starts for door* C. *As he is about to pass out,* MISS DURAND *calls.*)

MISS DUR. Bobby!

VAR. Well, Ethel?

MISS DUR. You,—you won't be too long clearing yourself, will you?

VAR. (*drops his case and rushes for her*). Ethel!

MISS DUR. (*throwing a chair between them*). No, no,—you mustn't,—really you mustn't. (*Extends her hand to him over the chair back.*) Good-bye!

VAR. (*kissing her hand*). Good-bye,—dear! (*Hurries out* C.)

MRS. C. (*outside* L.). Now that you've seen everything, my dear bishop, what do you think of the improvements I have had made?

(*At the sound of* MRS. COMPTON'S *voice*, MISS DURAND *runs off* R.; MRS. COMPTON *and* THE BISHOP *enter* L.)

THE BISHOP. Very good, very good indeed. It seems to me though that the rose garden would have been better on the northeast side of the house instead of at the south.

MRS. C. (*rings bell, and then seats herself on the sofa*). I think you are entirely right, Bishop Lowell,—it would be very much better on the other side. (*Draws a chair near sofa, and sits.*)

THE BISHOP. I suppose, however, that Mr. Vartray as a professional landscape gardener, had some technical reason for placing the roses as he did.

MRS. C. (*ringing again*). Mr. Vartray,—well you know Mr. Vartray is only a—a hired person, and of course has merely the stereotyped ideas. I am so sorry that I didn't have the benefit of your original suggestion in time to have the garden altered.

THE BISHOP. Really you flatter me, Mrs. Compton. I pretend to no eminence in such questions.

Enter MRS. MCGILLION, L.

MRS. C. Where is Jackson? I have rung twice for him to bring the coffee!

BARRING *enters abruptly*, R.

BAR. I say, where's Jackson? I've been ringing for him about five minutes.

MRS. MCG. Why, sir, wasn't he sent to the village? I saw him about ten minutes ago, hurrying across the fields on the short cut to the station. He had a big extension bag in his hand, and I supposed he was sent for something.

MRS. C. Jackson going?

BAR. Well, say, do you know anything about my old golf suit that I gave to him to have pressed the other day?

MRS. MCG. Why, sir, he had that suit on,—I supposed you had given it to him!

BAR. Given it to him! Hardly! I just recollected that I

had been such an ass as to leave all my last month's salary in one of the pockets.

THE BISHOP. Well, but there's no cause for alarm. Of course he'll be back immediately.

BAR. Oh, yes, of course. I suppose he was merely trying on the suit to see if it fitted him! (*Looking at his watch.*) He's safely away on the train by this time, and I've presented him with enough to take him quite a ways. Supposing you lend me a quarter, auntie,—thank you,—and now (*picking up* THE BISHOP'S *hat*), if I may take your hat,—being in a little hurry you know,—I guess I'll trot into the village and see if I can head him off by wire. (*Starts for door* C.)

THE BISHOP. Tut, tut, Mr. Barring. It's foolish of you to take the trip into the village. I'm sure Jackson will return shortly, and of course he hasn't stolen the money!

BAR. (*pausing at the door*). Tell you what, bishop, I won't stir a step for the village, provided you will agree to stand the amount gone if we find that he *has* stolen it.

MRS. C. Leonard!

THE BISHOP. Hum,—er,—why, really, I hardly see why I——

BAR. (*shrugs his shoulders*). Very well,—you're stumped! Good-day! (*Swings out briskly, slamming the door behind him.*)

VERY QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The reception-room at* MRS. COMPTON'S *town house. An afternoon in fall, about six months later than the time of the preceding acts. Wide open doorway* L., *wall forward. Smaller one back wall,* L. *Windows back wall* R. *and* R. *wall centre. Table with lamp and a few books* L. *wall centre. A rocking-chair in front of it, and another chair against the wall, between the table and the door. Stand with large music-box against wall* C. *just to right of the rear door. Two chairs facing each other in front of window* C. *Tea-table with kettle, cups, etc.,* R. C., *near window. Small sofa behind tea-table, sheltered from the room by a small screen. Chair at* L. *of tea-table.*

MRS. COMPTON *enters* L. *followed by* MISS DURAND *and* BARRING. *All three have on their outer garments, which they begin to remove as soon as they are on the scene.*

MISS DUR. What a delightful drive we have had! These Indian summer days are just the best in the year. I'm sorry that the days are getting so cool and the afternoons so short that we can't keep them up much longer.

MRS. C. Ring for Williams, please, Leonard.

BAR. Certainly, auntie. (*Rings bell which is on table.*) Unlace your gloves?

MRS. C. No, thank you, dear. Perhaps you can help Ethel.

Enter WILLIAMS, *a maid, door* C.

MISS DUR. (*who has seated herself on sofa*). All off, thank you,—you might light my alcohol lamp, if you will, please.

BAR. Of course,—very glad, I'm sure. (*He does so.*)

MRS. C. Here are my wraps, Williams, and take Miss Durand's too. Where do we dine to-night, Leonard?

BAR. Let's see,—Smithleys' isn't it? By Jove, we've been feeding round so much since we got back to town I can't remember where we *do* go. I hope it's Smithleys',—their chef

can make a sweet-bread cassolette that always makes me think of the gates of Paradise.

MISS DUR. No, I think it's Fergusons' to-night.

BAR. Oh, pshaw! Their cook isn't equal to anything more delicate than fillet of beef.

MRS. C. Williams, tell Nerton to have the brougham for us precisely at seven. I think I will lie down for an hour or so before I dress for dinner. You will receive any callers for me, Ethel, unless,—unless, you know, it should be the bishop. [*Exit* MRS. COMPTON L. *Exit* WILLIAMS C.

BAR. Goodness,—I wish she'd take her old bishop and run off with him, and leave you and me alone.

MISS DUR. The motion is seconded. Some tea?

BAR. No, thanks. I shall get liquid enough to-night with two dinners. I say, if you don't mind, do you suppose you could fix it up for us to get away early from the Fergusons'?

MISS DUR. Marie again?

BAR. Of course,—promised to take her for a little dinner after the show.

MISS DUR. Let me see,—it was a toothache last time, wasn't it? Then it will have to be a headache to-night. I guess I can manage one for you by half-past ten. Will that do?

BAR. First-rate. I'll bring you people right home, and then run over to the "club," (*he winks*), you know, for a little while. Say, it's awfully good of you to do this for me,—I tell you I appreciate it, and so does Marie. She thinks you're grand.

Enter TOMPKINS, *bearing salver with card.*

MISS DUR. I'm glad that she won't meet me and be undeceived. (*Taking the card.*) Show the bishop in, Tompkins, and tell Mrs. Compton that he is here.

BAR. What? His Graciousness here? This is where Uncle Leonard trots. Good-bye. (*Going.*) See you at dinner. Wish you pleasant call, you know. [*Exit* BARRING, C.

Enter THE BISHOP, L.

MISS DUR. (*rising to shake hands*). Good-afternoon, Bishop Lowell.

THE BISHOP. How do you do, Miss Durand? Splendid weather to be out of doors, is it not? I've been doing some

clerical visiting this afternoon, and it was so fine that I dismissed my carriage and walked all the way over here.

MISS DUR. Some tea, bishop? Auntie will be down in a few minutes, I know.

THE BISHOP. I *will* have a cup, if you please. I hope I didn't interrupt any engagement?

MISS DUR. Oh, no,—I think she rather expected that you might come in.

THE BISHOP. Now I wonder why? I didn't have the slightest idea of coming, but with some spare time at the end of my calls I recollected a little matter I wished to see her about, and so happened over.

(MISS DURAND *is about to pass him the cup of tea when* MRS. COMPTON *hastens in* L.)

MRS. C. My dear bishop,—(*shaking hands*), such an *unexpected* pleasure.

THE BISHOP. Quite so, quite so. Very glad to see you, dear Mrs. Compton.

MISS DUR. Some tea, auntie?

Enter TOMPKINS L., *bearing salver with card and letter.*

MRS. C. No, thank you, dear. For me, Tompkins?

TOMPKINS. For Miss Durand, ma'am.

MISS DUR. (*taking the card and letter*). Oh, it's Margaret. Show her right in, Tompkins.

MRS. C. (*crossing* L). Won't you come over and sit down, bishop? We'll let the young people have that corner to themselves. (*She sits in the rocking-chair.*)

THE BISHOP. Thank you. (*Sits in the chair beside table.*) Really, it seems quite a trivial matter I wanted to consult you about, but it is quite important socially.

MRS. C. I shall be very glad ——

MISS ROSWELL *enters* L.

MISS R. How do you do, Mrs. Compton? How do you do, Bishop Lowell? (THE BISHOP *bows.*)

MRS. C. (*shaking hands*). I am glad to see you, Miss Roswell.

MISS DUR. (*as* MISS ROSWELL *crosses to her*). Why, Margaret, dear, where have you been for so long? You haven't been in for three weeks, and when I called you were out.

Miss R. (*as they shake hands; kissing barred*). My dear girl, when you start in to get married, you will learn to appreciate my difficulties. What with picking out the right things for the flat myself, and preventing Jack from picking out the wrong ones, I haven't a minute to spare. Honestly though, I'm ashamed of my neglect.

The Bishop (*continuing his conversation with* Mrs. Compton). The last time Bishop French came to visit me, we got on very well, for he was alone; but since then he has been married, so now in my bachelor quarters I must undertake the entertainment of a resident female. You will appreciate the novelty of the situation to me. Perhaps you can suggest ——

(*They continue to converse.*)

Miss R. And haven't you heard from him?

Miss Dur. Mr. Vartray?

Miss R. Of course.

Miss Dur. Not a word.

Miss R. Seeking his vindication with a vengeance, isn't he? Did you know he was back in New York?

Miss Dur. What, here in the city?

Miss R. Jimmy says so. It's funny you haven't heard from him in any way.

Miss Dur. Why, here's a letter now that I haven't had a chance to open. Wouldn't it be funny if ——

Miss R. Say, I'll bet you anything it is from ——

(Miss Durand *opens the letter and reads it to herself.*)

The Bishop. And so, my dear friend, I thought I would venture to trespass on your goodness to ask for some hints in regard to their entertainment. My housekeeper is a good soul, but hardly up to the requirements of the situation.

Mrs. C. Indeed, my dear bishop, I am very, very glad if I can be of service to you.

The Bishop. I often think that I ought to have somebody, —perhaps a sort of social secretary,—to whom I could appeal at all times in regard to questions of this sort. I am so deeply engrossed in the religious work that I pay, I am afraid, too little attention to the purely temporal ——

Miss Dur. (*finishing the letter*). It is, it is!

Miss R. From him.

Miss Dur. He's coming here.

Miss R. Don't look so happy. When?

MISS DUR. This afternoon!

MISS R. Time?

MISS DUR. Half-past four.

MISS R. (*consulting her watch*). Then he's late.

Enter TOMPKINS, *bearing salver with card.*

MRS. C. Let us come up to my sitting-room, bishop. We shall be free from any interruption there. (*Rises.*)

THE BISHOP. Certainly, Mrs. Compton.

[*Exit* MRS. COMPTON, L., *followed by* THE BISHOP.

MISS DUR. (*taking the card*). You may send the gentleman in here, Tompkins.

TOMP. Very well, ma'am. (*Going* L.)

MISS R. Tell him to hurry up, too, Tompkins.

MISS DUR. Margaret! [*Exit* TOMPKINS, L.

MISS R. Now, dear, I'm going to do a lonesome in the library for a little while. I wouldn't spoil the success of this little reunion for anything. Remember, though, I shall allow you only fifteen minutes. If you don't cough for me in that time, I shall break in unasked. (*Going door* C.)

MISS DUR. (*a little flustered*). Oh, please, please don't go, dear.

MISS R. (*laughingly*). Poor, dear girl! All frightened to death, isn't she? Bye, bye.

(*Waves her hand, and runs out door* C. MISS DURAND *sits on the sofa and gazes expectantly at the door.* VARTRAY *comes in briskly and stops just inside the door.*)

VAR. Ethel!

MISS DUR. (*extending both her hands*). Bobby!

(VARTRAY *tosses his hat on table and crosses* R., *meeting* MISS DURAND *who has sprung up and crossed towards him.*)

VAR. (*taking both her hands*). There—there isn't any chair between us now, is there, Ethel?

MISS DUR. I—I don't see any, Bobby. (*He kisses her. After a moment she pushes away from him. With mock seriousness.*) Sir! What do you mean by toying with the affections of an unsophisticated schoolgirl? Are your intentions strictly honorable?

VAR. (*dropping on his knees before her and gesticulating romantically*). I swear,—I swear ——

MISS DUR. No, don't, Bobby. That isn't nice.

VAR. Well, then, as a matter of business we will put it this way. "Dear Miss Durand,—I love you. Will you kindly love me, and oblige, yours truly, E. Bobby Vartray?"

MISS DUR. And I should have to answer "Dear sir,—— Delighted to comply with your modest request."

VAR. (*rising and starting for her*). In token of which we this day set ——

MISS DUR. (*dodging behind tea-table*). No,—no more sealing now, Bobby. There are a million people in the house, both doors open, and all the curtains way up. (*She sits on the sofa.*) Oh, Bobby, how long you've been away!

VAR. (*sitting beside her and taking her hand*). Years, dear,—and if I could only stay, now that I've come again.

MISS DUR. You're not going away again, right off?

VAR. I must. I told you that I shouldn't come to see you until Jackson was caught, and I was vindicated before everybody.

MISS DUR. Then he has been ——

VAR. No, they haven't found him. The matter stands this way, Ethel. In settling for my services at "Fairthorn," last spring, Mrs. Compton wrote something to my firm. I don't know just what it was,—I don't suppose she accused me of the theft outright, but anyway, while they never *said* a word, they assigned me to nothing but ordinary and cheap bits of work, and have given me practically no responsibility ever since. Of course it's unfair and very galling. Last week, through some unexpected luck, I had a chance offered me to go out to South America as superintendent of a large plantation that is being opened there, and I decided to take it.

MISS DUR. You're going to South America?

VAR. Yes,—I think it's best.

MISS DUR. When?

VAR. Well, if you must—to-night.

MISS DUR. Not to-night, Bobby.

VAR. Oh, Ethel, I ought not to have come. I swore I wouldn't, you know, until I stood clear even in Mrs. Compton's eyes, but I couldn't bear to go without at least coming to say good-bye.

(BARRING *hurries in door* L. *waving a telegram.* MISS DURAND *and* VARTRAY *rise in surprise.*)

BAR. Oh, I say, Ethel, hurrah, don't you know? They've

caught —— Why, Vartray, where the deuce did you come from? Say, I'm jolly glad to see you.

VAR. (*shaking hands*). Thank you, Leonard, I'm very glad to see you again.

BAR. Funny you should happen in here, for I know you'll be interested. You were mixed up with the old rascal, too.

VAR. What old rascal?

BAR. Jackson, of course.

MISS DUR. What about him?

BAR. Oh, I've just got a wire saying that they've nabbed him in Kansas City, trying to pawn some stolen property.

VAR. Thank goodness, that lifts a load.

MISS DUR. How did you happen to know?

BAR. Why, it's this way; after Elly accused him of lifting the brooch, you know, he skipped out with a suit of mine and a lump of money that was in it. Why, say, it was a bare faced steal,—I almost saw him take it—but that clerical friend of auntie's stood up for him even then,—talked a lot of rot about "personal convert," "must be a mistake," "sure he'd return," and all that. So it made me mad, and I set the Pinkerton people after him. The telegram is from them.

VAR. I've had them on his track, too. There's probably a telegram for me at my hotel now. Thank you very much for telling me.

MISS DUR. It's very kind of you, Leonard.

BAR. I *thought* you'd like to know. But say, I've got to trot now, and break the good news to—well, to somebody else. Bye-bye,—so long.

VAR. AND MISS DUR. Good-bye.

(BARRING *hurries out* L.)

VAR. I'm afraid, dear, there's nothing for me to do except like Barring to say "Good-bye," and trot out.

MISS DUR. Surely you're going to tell auntie about Jackson before you go?

VAR. No; she'll find it out through Leonard in a few days in a way she cannot doubt, and, prejudiced as she is, I really don't think she would believe it on the strength of my own assertion backed up only by the telegram. She would probably declare the telegram forged, and look to the bishop for confirmation.

MISS DUR. And you must really go now,—oh, Bobby, it's

so long since I've seen you, and now I've only had you for a minute.

VAR. Don't, Ethel, don't. You can't know how I hate to go. You believe though, don't you dear, that the very first minute that I feel that I can fairly ask you to come to me, I shall hurry back after you?

MISS DUR. Don't let it be long, will you, Bobby?

VAR. I hope not, sweetheart. It will be lonesome, won't it, but we'll both be brave and true, and then—well, then we won't ever be lonesome any more.

MISS DUR. I'll remember, Bobby,—brave and true. Good-bye, my big boy!

VAR. Good-bye, brave little woman. (*They kiss.* MISS DURAND *turns away facing* R., *trying to control herself.* VARTRAY *crosses abruptly to table* L., *and picks up his hat. He pauses a moment undetermined, and then pitches it back on the table, turning and hurrying across to* MISS DURAND.) It's no use, dear, I can't face the lonesomeness. I'm not as brave as you are. Will you take all the risks and come with me?

MISS DUR. Come with you!

VAR. Yes, marry me,—now—and we'll go South together.

MISS DUR. (*grasping the idea slowly*). Marry you? When? Where?

VAR. Now and here.

MISS DUR. But,—but,—I haven't any clothes.

VAR. (*laughing*). How feminine! I guess you could start in what you have on, and send the rest after us.

MISS DUR. I'm,—I'm sure auntie will object.

VAR. Considering that she's responsible for the whole mix-up I don't think her wishes deserve any particular consideration.

MISS DUR. But who can marry us?

VAR. Isn't the bishop about? It looked like his hat in the hall.

MISS DUR. I know he won't unless auntie says "all right."

VAR. I rather think I can squelch his objections.

MISS DUR. But,—but I don't think I ought to. It's so,—so unconventional.

(MISS ROSWELL *bursts in door* C.)

MISS R. Oh, Ethel, you must, you must. I'll never forgive you if you don't. It's simply great,—so romantic!

MISS DUR. Margaret! You've been listening!

MISS R. I have. I confess it, dear, but only a minute. You know I told you I should come in if you didn't send for me. (*Running to* VARTRAY.) Elphron Vartray, you're the nicest man that ever lived. Ethel, if you don't take him right off now after the nasty way your aunt has acted, and the nice way he's behaved, why I'll—I'll never speak to you again as long as I live.

MISS DUR. I don't see, Bobby, but what I'm driven to it. (*Rings bell on tea-table.*) Now for the bishop.

MISS R. My gracious, what an al fresco wedding! If we can't have a real altar and candles, at least we'll have a real bishop, and the next best thing. Give me a match, Elphron. (*She lights lamp on table* L.)

Enter TOMPKINS, C.

MISS DUR. You tell him, Bobby.

VAR. Will you please tell Bishop Lowell that a gentleman wishes to see him down here privately for a few moments on very important business.

TOMP. Yes, sir. [*Exit* L.

MISS R. Now, dear, you hold up the lamp so I can put these big books under it. There. Now we'll drape my long scarf about it, so as to cover up the books. Doesn't that give an altary effect? I feel quite as if I were in a church.

MISS DUR. You're a dear. Now is there anything else? Goodness, we haven't any license!

VAR. By George, I forgot all about a license!

MISS R. Oh, dear, the license!

Enter HEATON L.

HEAT. What's all this about a dog? Excuse me for breaking in unannounced, but I couldn't rouse Tompkins, so I told the maid I'd come right up as I knew Madge was here.

VAR. Why, Jimmy old man, how are you?

HEAT. You here, Elly? (*Shaking hands.*) By Jove, I'm glad to see you.

MISS R. Oh, Jimmy, what shall we do?

HEAT. Anything you say, Madgie. What's the row?

MISS R. They haven't got any license.

HEAT. So the cop shot their pet dog I suppose?

MISS R. No, stupid, it's a marriage license.

HEAT. Who's going to be married?

MISS R. Elphron and Ethel, of course.

HEAT. Say, I'm glad to hear that. Congratulations, both.

MISS R. Will you listen, and stop rattling on. Elphron's got to start for South America to-night, so they've got to be married this minute.

HEAT. Sort of a ten-minutes-for-refreshments-affair, eh? Well, I guess I can stand it if they can. They are shy of a license?

VAR. That's where the hitch comes in.

HEAT. Oh, well, don't bother about that. (*Producing a paper from his inside pocket.*) I always carry a dozen or two with me in case of emergency.

MISS R. Jimmy, stop fooling. I tell you we're serious. What have you got?

HEAT. A marriage license, of course.

MISS DUR. A marriage license!

HEAT. Certainly. I was down to the City Hall to-day, and it occurred to me that I'd be forehanded and drop in and get a license for Madge and I,—we're only about a month shy of the affair you know. I went to Billy Gaylor,—he's in the city clerk's office there. Well, Billy began to fire the questions at me, you know. Say, Madgie, he asked me everything from the size of your shoes to how many false teeth you have, and he wanted to know a lot of things about myself that I'll have to look up in the family Bible. So I gave Billy a cigar, and he signed one in blank. I promised to telephone him the answers after I found out, so he can enter them in something or other down there. Now, Ethel, wait till I get out my pencil, and I'll fix you up in a second.

(*He sits on the sofa.* MISS DURAND *and* MISS ROSWELL *gather about him, and he is apparently asking questions and noting answers from* MISS DURAND. THE BISHOP *enters* L.)

THE BISHOP. Ah, Mr. Vartray, you here? (*Bows.*) Are you the gentleman that wanted to see me?

VAR. Very particularly, Bishop Lowell. Miss Durand and I wish you to marry us at once.

THE BISHOP (*astounded*). Wish me to *what?*

VAR. You understood. You will do it?

THE BISHOP. Hum,—er,—why, this is a most extraordinary request. Does Mrs. Compton know of the matter?

VAR. She does not, and I don't intend that she shall until it is over.

THE BISHOP. Then, sir, I must refuse peremptorily. Standing, as she does, almost *in loco parentis* to Miss Durand, I cannot unite you without her full consent.

VAR. I would point out to you, bishop, that we are both over age, and free to consent.

THE BISHOP. That has no weight, sir, without Mrs. Compton's permission.

VAR. Oh, very well. Perhaps, bishop, you would like to appear in the *Christian Intelligencer*, as the converter and abettor of the notorious criminal Jackson?

THE BISHOP. Jackson?

VAR. Very likely you do not know that Mr. Barring has had a telegram from the Pinkertons reporting the capture of Jackson in the West, and his identification as a famous ex-convict of Sing Sing.

THE BISHOP. What, can this be true?

VAR. My word for it, sir. From what little I know of church politics in this diocese, I gather that your rather lofty notions have made you quite unpopular with the low church element, which is, I understand, in the majority. Such an article as I have mentioned in the leading church paper would be quite a tool in their hands in case your removal was actively sought by them.

THE BISHOP. My dear Mr. Vartray,—you,—you,—er,—put quite another face on the matter.

VAR. I thought perhaps I could.

THE BISHOP. You have a license?

VAR. It will be ready in a moment.

HEAT. Go ahead, Elly. I've got Ethel's schedule all down here, and I guess I know enough about you to make a respectable showing.

THE BISHOP. It would be well to have more witnesses.

MISS R. (*ringing the bell twice*). Certainly, we'll summon the household. Now for the procession,—if you'll stand in front of the er—altar, if you'll excuse me, bishop. Elphron, you come in that door. (*Pointing to door*, C.) You can't have any best man, because Jimmy's got to take her in and give her away. Here, Jimmy and Ethel. (*Forming them* R., *facing front.*) Give her your arm, Jimmy.

HEAT. (*offering it*). Wait till I get up a serious expression

and assume a little age. I don't think anybody would take me for her father, or even her uncle.

MISS R. No music? (*Glances around and spies the music-box.*) Oh, Ethel, you must have that "Lohengrin" thing somewhere.

MISS DUR. Yes, it's in the pile of disks there.

MISS R. Here it is. (*She adjusts the music disk to the box and starts it.*) Now then, everything complete. I'll march behind you, and be the bridesmaid.

(VARTRAY *comes forward from door* C., *and the others parade slowly across front, meeting at the table, in front of* THE BISHOP. TOMPKINS *and* WILLIAMS *come in quietly at door* C., *and stand in the background.*)

THE BISHOP. Well, well, this is very irregular, but I trust all will be well.

HEAT. I'll take the risk, bishop, if you'll just buck up and get things started before Mrs. Compton comes down.

THE BISHOP. Very irregular, very irregular! (*Takes a hard look at the servants, then heaves a sigh and starts in.*) Hum,—Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together here ——

MRS. COMPTON *enters hurriedly*, L., *stopping just inside the door.* WILLIAMS *shuts off the music-box.*

MRS. C. What is going on here? Bishop, what *are* you doing?

THE BISHOP. They insisted, my dear Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. Insisted on what?

THE BISHOP. On being married at once.

MRS. C. (*shrieking it*). *Married?* Heavens, Ethel, have you gone crazy? I forbid it. Bishop, stop at once.

HEAT. Hold on, Mrs. Compton, you're out of order. We haven't got to the "if any one can show just cause" part yet.

MRS. C. (*crossing to centre*). Sir, you are impertinent!

MISS DUR. (*following*). Oh, Aunt Nellie, let me explain ——

MISS R. Really, Mrs. Compton, you must ——

THE BISHOP (*also following*). My dear Mrs. Compton ——

(BARRING *rushes excitedly in* L.)

BAR. Come here, fellows. (*Beckoning* VARTRAY *and* HEATON, L., *forward.*) By jingo, I've done it!

HEAT. Done what?

(BARRING *says something to them in a low tone.*)

VAR. (*astounded*). You! Married!

HEAT. Marie?

MRS. C. What's that? Somebody else crazy?

BAR. (*trying to carry the matter lightly*). I say, auntie, don't you know, how would you fancy me as a benedict? Ha, ha!

MRS. C. Quick,—who is she?

BAR. Marie Demarque.

MRS. C. The ballet woman! (*Shrieks.*) Ah! (*Faints dead away.* THE BISHOP *catches her, and moves her to the sofa.* MISS DURAND *and* MISS ROSWELL *help her, while the servants run out for restoratives.*)

BAR. Oh, it's all right,—don't be frightened. I've lived with Aunt Nellie seven years, and she has never failed to have one of those every time anything goes the way she don't want it to.

VAR. Of course, Leonard, we both congratulate you on getting Marie, but for heaven's sake tell us how you came to marry her so suddenly.

BAR. I suppose you fellows thought I didn't know that she was Annie Jackson, or Annie Thurston, rather?

HEAT. What? You know she is Jackson's daughter?

BAR. I saw her when she was out at Fairthorn last spring, though you thought I didn't. Naturally I asked her what she had been there for, and I finally got hold of the whole story. Of course, I don't say that I would have taken up with her so much if I'd known it in the first place who she was, but it would have been mean to drop her just on that account, wouldn't it?

HEAT. Mean, yes,—but a lot of men would have done it.

BAR. Say, she was a brick. When I had found out who her father was, you know, she swore she wouldn't marry me for all the world, but I kind of hung on, thinking she'd see it the way I did and change.

VAR. And she did?

BAR. Well, it was this way. When I got that telegram I went straight off to her from here and told her that they had got him. Of course I wouldn't prosecute and I could fix it so auntie wouldn't, but the Pinkertons tell me that he's wanted in connection with an unsuccessful bank break that happened out there in Kansas City about a month ago. That's good for a twenty years' sentence anyway, and he's due to die before that

time, so I said to Annie, "You're all alone now, and by George, I won't have it. You've got to marry me right off." She said, "Never: do you think I'm going to let you mix up with a family like mine? What would your aunt say?" I said, "I don't give a bing for family or aunt." So I picked her up, willy nilly, and we hustled off in a cab to the nearest justice and then came here to break the news.

HEAT. (*shaking his hand*). By Jove, old man, you're true blue. There isn't one man in a hundred would have the moral courage for that.

BAR. Oh, that's nothing. You see I like Marie pretty well, and there's nothing like that for making moral courage. But I say, what would you do? Auntie don't seem to take very kindly to it. She's been paying me a pretty good salary for not doing much, and now if she turns me adrift I'm willing enough to work, but I've never been brought up for anything in particular, and I'm a good deal of a duffer anyway.

(WILLIAMS *runs in* C., *with bottle for* MRS. COMPTON.)

WILLIAMS. The ammonia, Miss Durand.

VAR. (*to* BARRING). Where is Marie?

BAR. Down in the hall.

VAR. Well, the best thing I can think of is to bring her in and present her to Mrs. Compton. I was quite impressed at Fairthorn with her good manners and general appearance, and Mrs. Compton may be.

BAR. By George, old fellow, I'll try it. [*Exit*, L.

THE BISHOP. Is she improving, do you think?

MISS DUR. (*holding the bottle to her nose*). This ammonia will bring her to in a moment. It never fails.

Enter BARRING, L., *leading* MARIE. *She is dressed very quietly and neatly, with none of the flashy actress about her.*

VAR. (*shaking hands with her*). I'm very glad to see you again and to be the first to wish you happiness, Mrs. Barring. Perhaps you had better stand here, so that she may see you at once.

(MRS. COMPTON *opens her eyes, draws a deep breath, and sits up, confronting* MRS. BARRING.)

[*Exit* WILLIAMS, C.

MRS. C. (*very tersely*). Who's this?

BAR. My wife, dear Aunt Nellie.

MRS. C. Humph! You're an actress?

MRS. BAR. Yes, Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. Where are your flashy clothes?

MRS. BAR. In my dressing-room, Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. Where is your bleached hair?

MRS. BAR. In my wig-box, Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. Where is all your paint and powder?

MRS. BAR. In the wash-bowl, Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. Where are all your tawdry jewels?

MRS. BAR. In the savings bank, Mrs. Compton.

MRS. C. Humph,—I don't think you're at all true to the traditions of the stage. Do you, Bishop Lowell?

THE BISHOP. Why, in my younger days, the actresses whom I used to know,—er hum,—I mean whom I used to read about were indeed quite different,—one might say, I suppose, quite more,—er—noisy.

MRS. C. Well, Leonard, I don't know that there is any particular use of my opposing your marriage, particularly considering that it has already taken place. But listen—I discharge you at once as manager of my estates.

BAR. I expected it, auntie.

MRS. C. Tut, tut,—let me finish. The bishop wants somebody who shall be a sort of social secretary for him. Now you've been a very good boy to me, Leonard, and have done the best you can, but I think you'd shine better as a social manager rather than a business manager, so I have recommended you to the bishop.

THE BISHOP. And I have the pleasure of offering you the position.

BAR. I say, by Jove, auntie, that's immensely kind of you. (*Kisses her.*) And say, bishop, I may be considerable of a duffer at business, but when it comes to the social song I'm high tenor from the start. (*Shaking hands.*) Say, it's good of you. My wife, bishop. (MRS. BARRING *and* THE BISHOP *shake hands.*) Come up here and talk it over.

(*They withdraw to the chairs in front of the window* C. HEATON *and* MISS ROSWELL *also withdraw to the chairs near the table* L., *leaving* VARTRAY *and* MISS DURAND *near* MRS. COMPTON, *who is still on the sofa.*)

MISS DUR. Now, dear Aunt Nellie, that you're playing the

fairy godmother to all the others, why won't you be good to us, too, and let the bishop go on with the ceremony? Considering that Jackson has been caught ——

MRS. C. Caught?

MISS DUR. And especially as Leonard is now safely married to somebody else, so that there's no chance of his wanting me, why won't you ——

MRS. C. Well, I don't know why I shouldn't, under all the circumstances. I don't mind telling you, now that it's all over, that I had my heart set on your marrying Leonard, but I've carried through so many of these successful affairs that I suppose I ought to be defeated sometimes.

VAR. Leonard, can you excuse the bishop a moment? Mrs. Compton ——

MRS. C. Tut, tut,—why all this indecent haste? Now that I've consented is there any reason why you shouldn't wait and have a civilized marriage with all the usual quantity of duplicate silver?

MISS DUR. Why, you see, auntie, Bobby has accepted a position in South America, and he has to start to-night.

MRS. C. South America? To-night? And you were going with him? Never! See here, Mr. Vartray, how much were these,—er,—Southern heathens going to give you?

VAR. Why,—er——

MRS. C. Rather a personal question, wasn't it? No matter, you're not going South. I need a new manager for my estates,—especially to look after my brooches—and I'm sure you have proved yourself the very man. I will pay you more than they were to.

VAR. But I am under promise to start to-night.

MRS. C. Bosh,—they can get another man easier than I can, and I will look out for any loss of time while they are after somebody else.

VAR. But I don't feel that I ought to accept these favors at your hands, Mrs. Compton, after ——

MISS DUR. Sh! Bobby! *Dear* Aunt Nellie! (*Kisses her.*) We both thank you a thousand times,—don't we, Bobby?

VAR. Of course, of course,—several thousand times.

HEAT. This makes me feel like the last act of a comic opera. Loving couples scattered all over the stage, and the curtain ready to go down to blissful strains.

MRS. C. With the bishop and I the only discords in the harmony.

THE BISHOP. I'm sure, dear Mrs. Compton, I don't know why we shouldn't fill out the picture.

(THE BISHOP *advances to* MRS. COMPTON *who has risen.* VARTRAY *and* MISS DURAND *withdraw to the extreme right.* BARRING *and* MRS. BARRING *advance to the left centre forward, so that the four couples are across the stage, beginning with* HEATON *and* MISS ROSWELL *on the left.*)

MRS. C. I don't know after all, my dear bishop, but that the situation demands that we should. (*Gives him her hand.*)

ALL. Hurrah! (*They applaud laughingly.*)

VAR. All this happiness surely demands some sort of a celebration. I know you're not ready for a dinner party here, Mrs. Compton, so I invite you all down to the Waldorf ——

THE BISHOP. No, no,—Mr. Vartray, as the senior here, I insist ——

HEAT. Pardon me, bishop, but as the oldest standing fiancé in the party I must claim ——

BAR. Whoa, all of you. Back up, and recognize the sole right of your Uncle Leonard, as the only benedict in the crowd, to act as host. I will telephone to the hotel at once. Come, Marie!

(*They go out* L. *arm in arm.*)

HEAT. And I'll run out on the front step and whistle for cabs. Come, Madgie!

(*They go out arm in arm* L.)

VAR. And I'll ——

MRS. C. Just a moment please, Mr. Vartray. (*Ringing the bell.*) I must introduce the servants to the new manager.

VAR. Perhaps it *would* be a good idea.

Enter TOMPKINS *and* WILLIAMS *back.*

MISS DUR. (*aside to* VARTRAY). My, my! Why this promptness? They must have expected something interesting.

MRS. C. Tompkins and Williams, my new manager. (VARTRAY *and the servants bow.*) Also, your new master. (*Indicating* THE BISHOP.)

TOMP. (*astonished*). What, ma'am? Oh yes, ma'am. Of course, ma'am. (*Bows very low.*)

MISS DUR. Come, Bobby. We'll go and send word to the Fergusons that we shan't be able to come to dinner to-night, auntie. [VARTRAY *and* MISS DURAND *exeunt arm in arm* L.

MRS. C. That's right, dear. We shall all be away this evening, Tompkins. Your arm, Frederick.

THE BISHOP. Certainly, dear Helen. Both of them, now and forever. [*They exeunt* L.

TOMP. Well, well,—so the mistress is to marry again. You could have knocked me down with a feather when she told us so abrupt like.

WILL. (*drawing the shades at window* C.). A feather? I should have sunk under a look! And a new manager, too!

TOMP. (*crossing to table* L., *and turning down the lamp*). New master and new boss notwithstanding, I tell you Mrs. Compton never had nor never will have but one manager.

WILL. (*drawing the shades at window* R.). And who might that be?

TOMP. (*pauses to blow out the light and then replies very solemnly and impressively*). Herself.

QUICK CURTAIN.

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ACT II.—The Union camp. The spy. The fortune of war. A secret move. In a tight place. Ladies in camp. Cornered. The dispatches. The capture. FACE TO FACE.

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